

**AUGUSTA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION STUDY  
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING  
ROOM 803, MUNICIPAL BUILDING, AUGUSTA, GEORGIA  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2008, 11:00 A.M.**

**Voting Members present:**

Ron Cross, Chairman, Columbia Co. Commission -  
**Chairman**

Deke Copenhaver, Mayor of Augusta – **Vice-  
Chairman**

C. H. Williams, Mayor of Burnettsville

Sandra Korbelik (representing Fred Cavanaugh,  
Mayor of Aiken)

Stephen Strohming (representing Ronnie Young,  
Chairman, Aiken County Council)

Skip Grkovic (representing Lark Jones, Mayor of  
North Augusta)

**Voting Members absent:**

Robert Buchwitz, Chairman Hephzibah  
Commission

Tom Cobb, Mayor of Blythe

George James, Mayor of Grovetown

Marion Carnell, SC – 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional  
District Commissioner

Col John Holwick – Fort Gordon

Gena Evans, GA DOT Commissioner

**Others Present (N = Nonvoting Member)**

**Augusta-Richmond Co. Planning Commission**

George Patty

Paul DeCamp

Lynn Russell

Juriah Lewis

**Columbia County**

Scott Herring

**SC DOT**

Michael Dennis

Jim Frierson

Brian Fulmer

Machael Peterson

**Fort Gordon**

Rob Spoo

**GA DOT**

Vonda Everett

Cissy McNure

Michael Keene

Karen Quarles

**City of Augusta**

Heyward Johnson

**Aiken County**

Gerald Jefferson

**City of Augusta**

Jim Williamson

**INVOCATION AND INTRODUCTIONS**

**Mr. Copenhaver moved to approve the addition of the addendum to the agenda. Mr. Grkovic seconded. Motion carried by unanimous approval.**

**1. Consider approval of the minutes of the Policy Committee meetings held on June 5, 2008.**

Mr. Williams moved to approve the minutes of June 5, 2008. Mayor Copenhagen seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

**2. Consider recommending an amendment to the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program as follows:**

**a) Amend Work Element 4.2.1 Public Administration – Augusta Public Transit by changing the budget amount to \$73, 302.00 (original amount \$92,354.00).**

Mr. Lewis presented this item. This is a housekeeping item. The bulk of the 5303 planning grant money is in this work element. This amount was changed BY Georgia DOT when the grant application was approved after the UPWP was approved and printed.

Mayor Copenhagen moved to approve the amendment to the FY 2009 UPWP. Mr. Grkovic seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

**3. Consider endorsing a Special Study project in the city of Aiken. The project will focus on the north side of the city and include corridor studies of Highway 19 from Hampton Road to I-20, the SC 118 bypass from Highway 19 to Richland Avenue West, and University Parkway from the bypass to Wal-Mart. One objective is to identify new road locations and protect the right-of-way for these roads. The total estimated project cost is \$150,000.**

Mrs. Korbelik presented this item. This is an application for planning funds. A couple years ago Aiken prepared a study on an area on the north side just outside of the city limits. This is an area which is expected to experience a high growth rate in the future. We would now like to take the next step which would be to identify and design possible routes for future roadways by studying the major corridors in the growth area.

Mayor Copenhagen moved to approve the amendment to the FY 2009 UPWP. Mr. Grkovic seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

**4. Approve an amendment to the Capital Schedule for Augusta Public Transit in the FY 2008 – 2011 Transportation Improvement Program (see attached).**

Mr. Johnson presented this item. The capital schedule is included in the agenda package. The MPO did not prepare a TIP this year (FY 2009) due to the fact that GDOT is developing a prioritization process for transportation projects. APT is making changes in the capital purchases programmed. FY 09 Capital Schedule for Augusta Public Transit includes bus signs, a copier, fare boxes, bill counter, coin sorter and inter-active voice response (IVR) equipment to be used with the ADA Para-transit service. Once a person

is scheduled for a ride, the IVR system will call them after hours to let them know what time they will be picked up. The contingency amount has also changed since it is based on 7% of the overall budget.

Mr. Lewis explained that FY 05 money was set to expire at the end of September 2008. The TIP is being amended to use the FY 05 funds on the identified capital items.

Mr. Grkovic moved to approve this amendment to the 2008 – 2011 TIP. Mrs. Korbelik seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

**5. Update on 2008 – 2011 TIP (SC portion) – correction to funding levels:**

**(a) Job Access and Reverse Commute Program – add \$191,000 for a total of \$341,466**

**(b) New Freedom Program – add \$101,460 for a total of \$201,460**

Mrs. Shade presented this item. We are requesting a correction to the 2008 – 2011 TIP to include some additional funding that we had been notified is available under two programs: the Job Access and Reverse Commute Program (JARC – Section 5316) and the New Freedom Program (section 5317). LSCOG would like to apply for funds under these two programs to upgrade some of the equipment being used on the Aiken County transit system. An application is being submitted for JARC funds in the amount of \$191,466, and a separate application, in the amount of \$101,460, is being submitted under the New Freedom Program.

Mayor Copenhagen moved to approve this amendment to the 2009 – 2011 TIP. Mr. Grkovic seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

**6. Update on Special Studies Projects:**

**(a) Regional Freight Study**

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. The Freight Study is about 85% complete. One of the major tasks - the development of freight profile of a region – was completed about a month ago. The consultant has also documented freight needs and deficiencies, and most recently completed a draft report identifying potential freight improvement projects. The project steering committee is scheduled to meet with the consultant next Monday to review the draft list of projects, identify specific criteria that will be used to prioritize the projects and discuss how to roll those projects into the overall ARTS planning process. The study is running about two weeks behind and should be completed by the end of next month. As part of the process there will be one additional public meeting held at a date to be announced. We invite your continued participation.

**(b) APT Transit Development Plan**

This will be covered with agenda item #10.

## **7. Update on Air Quality Initiatives**

### **(a) Aiken County**

Mr. Jefferson presented this item. Aiken County continues to participate in the 2.5 PM Early Action Compact process. EPA is sponsoring an initiative called the Sustainable Skyline Program. This is a competitive program that will make a total of \$150,000 available for local / regional air quality initiatives. Originally EPA was going to issue an RFP, but now EPA has decided to issue a call for applications. There will be a sixty-day application process. Multiple areas across the state will be allowed to submit a joint application. EPA does not want an entire state to apply but rather small areas to participate in the process. Tomorrow afternoon is when DEHEC will announce whether or not the application will be posted on their website.

### **(b) Richmond County**

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. We continue with our education and outreach efforts area wide. If any local government would like a general presentation on the overall air quality initiatives we have going we will be happy to do that at any time. We will add a smog alert to the CSRA Clean Air Campaign website. Fort Gordon has a formally kicked off commute options program on the base in conjunction with the Clean Air Campaign of Georgia. We are looking forward to the call for applications under the Sustainable Skyline Program. Over the last year and a half, we have held five (5) stakeholder meetings on our initiatives and we will be scheduling another meeting within the next month.

Mr. Cross stated he would like to have Mr. DeCamp come to one of the Columbia County Commissioners meeting to give an update on the entire program and where we are and what we expect to come out of it.

## **8. Status of Projects:**

### **(a) Georgia Highways**

Ms. Everett presented this item. There are no projects scheduled to be let within the next three months.

- SR 104 (Washington Road at Halali Farm Road (intersection improvement project) – Right-of-way is 66% complete. The project let date is December 8<sup>th</sup> contingent on funds being available.
- Old Petersburg Road / Old Evans Road (widening project) – all right-of-way activity has been suspended due to budget issues for transportation projects statewide.
- Wrightsboro Road from Jimmie Dyess Parkway to I-520 SB Ramp (widening project) – all right-of-way activity has been suspended due to budget issues for transportation projects statewide.
- I-520 from US 1 to Gordon Highway (widening and interchange improvements) – A Value Engineering Study is scheduled for November 7, 2008

Mr. Cross stated he read that DOT is expecting the audit results next week and asked if anyone with DOT has any indication if this will be worse than expected, especially in light of these two projects being suspended.

Mrs. Everett stated that there is no indication at this time. Construction for both of these projects (i.e. Old Petersburg/Old Evans and Wrightsboro Road) is in Long Range, so even if the money is available there will not be an immediate rush to go back to acquiring the right-of-way.

Mr. Cross asked how much weight where an existing project already has right-of-way purchased have in the priority system. Mrs. Everett stated she has not been in the project prioritization meetings. If a project is ready and right-of-way is complete, this would carry more weight than if not done.

Mr. Cross stated in a meeting Commissioner Kuhlke brought up impact projects that the data does not fit. You have quality of life projects that the data would not necessarily push forward and the projects that have been on the books forever that maybe in comparison with something would not fit in the data. Do you have any more information about how the priority is going to work?

Mr. Keene stated that for projects already in the pipeline and having funds expended on them, they have indicated DOT will use that as subjective criteria in terms of the overall rankings. Once you have spent a substantial amount of money on a project you don't just want to put it on a shelf and have it get stall before it works its way back up.

#### **(b) South Carolina Highways**

Mrs. Petersen presented this item.

- Palmetto Parkway Phase 2 – Work is ongoing. The contractor has begun work at the interchange of US 25 and the widening of US 25. Through the end of August, \$98 million has been expended on this project, which is 62% complete. Completion date is December 2009.
- Georgia Avenue Extension – Construction is 70% complete and is scheduled to be finished in November 2008.
- Silver Bluff Road (SC 3020) – SC DOT met with the City of Aiken to discuss the findings of the traffic and intersection studies. Aiken is in the process of reviewing the information and another meeting will be scheduled shortly to determine the scope of the project.
- East Buena Vista Avenue - The project is on hold until the new scope is determined and accepted into the ARTS Long Range Plan and TIP. Once approved, a new schedule will be developed.
- 5th Street Bridge Interchange Project - Proposals have been received for this project. The Committee met and sent a summary of review of their recommendations to management and to the state Transportation Commission.
- Intersection Improvement Project (Dougherty Rd. @ Silver Bluff Rd.) - Funds have been programmed for the addition of a right turn lane from NB Silver Bluff Road to EB Dougherty Road. Traffic Engineering will manage the project and develop a construction schedule for this project. It is anticipated that additional right-of-way will be needed to construct the project. Construction is expected to begin in late 2009.

**(c) Augusta Public Transit**

Mr. Johnson presented this item. The rising cost of fuel is the big issue APT is facing at this time. Fuel costs have increased 58% since the first of the year. At the August 11<sup>th</sup> Augusta Commission meeting, APT requested \$335,000 for fuel for the remainder of the year. The Commission approved \$25,000 and asked APT to come back in one month with a proposal for financing fuel costs for the remainder of the year.

At the Augusta Public Services Committee meeting this past Monday, one of the Commissioners recommended temporarily using funds set aside for the Augusta Trade, Event and Exhibition Center (TEE) to fund fuel needed to operate APT's bus fleet. A trade and tourism tax was added to hotel room rates to help pay for the TEE Center and inner city redevelopment projects. \$350,000 of this money was being set aside for the management of the center. If approved by the full Commission, these funds will be used to offset the funds for fuel and transit operations until the money is needed for the management of the trade center. APT's 2009 budget includes \$700,000 for fuel. APT ridership has increased 4.5% since last year.

**(d) Aiken County Transit**

Mrs. Shade presented this item. Aiken County ridership is also up. Medical groups and other businesses are calling to see how they can get the bus to go to their location so more employees can ride. There is a lot of interest and good publicity for the system.

**ADDENDUM**

9. **Consider a recommendation to amend the FY 2008 – 2011 Transportation Improvement Program by combining the East Buena and Atomic Road projects into one project so that only one Need and Purpose statement applies to both corridors. This will allow funds for the Atomic Road project to be shifted to other project(s).**

Mr. Jefferson presented this item. This amendment would combine the two projects resulting in a new need and purpose statement, new termini and cost savings. The need and purpose for the Atomic Road was originally capacity and safety. The need and purpose for East Buena Vista Avenue was originally for capacity and economic development. The need and purpose for the combined project will be operation, safety and connectivity.

Mr. Grkovic added that the scope of both projects is substantially reduced but they are connected.

Mr. Williams moved to approve this amendment to the TIP. Mr. Copenhaver seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

**10. Consider approval of a recommendation to hire the selected consultant to prepare the Transit Development Plan for Augusta Public Transit**

Mr. Johnson presented this item. Augusta Richmond County asked Augusta Public Transit to prepare a Transit Development Plan. ARTS Special Studies money in the amount of \$150,000 was applied for and approved to fund this plan. An RFQ was sent out and responses were received from four firms, Jordan Jones and Goulding, Kinetics, Wilbur Smith Associates and URS. Last Thursday and Friday a selection committee interviewed the four consultants. The committee recommends that Wilbur Smith Associates be hired to prepare the TDP. A price proposal was requested and they submitted a proposal of \$133,800 to prepare the plan. We are requesting the TCC/ CAC approve this recommendation to hire Wilbur Smith Associates to prepare the TDP for \$133,800.

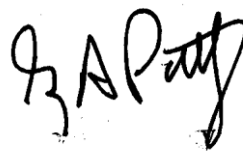
Mr. Copenhagen moved to approve this recommendation. Mr. Grkovic seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Cross stated that despite all he said in the past, he is encouraged by the GDOT situation. There have been some good meetings in Washington talking about a north south corridor on the eastern side of the state. With the attitude with the Commissioners and staff and through the efforts, this will not be a good situation budget wise, but the Governor, Lt. Governor, Speaker of the House all have said something has to be done about transportation funding. Columbia County has stepped up and hopefully will have approval for one of the SPLOST projects (Washington Road out to William Few Parkway) from the citizens to have a partnership with GDOT and a private contractor. There is tentative approval from GDOT to make this a five lane with center turn lane as opposed to a concrete median. There is also a commitment from GDOT to look at Flowing Wells Road as a three lane facility as opposed to a four lane roadway with a concrete median. Mr. Cross hopes the situation is improving. He believes it was severe enough to have to take some action to make improvements and it will be a better situation over the years to come.

Mrs. McNure invited everyone to attend the IT3 Investing in Tomorrow's Transportation Today on November 26, 2008 at the Columbia County Library.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "GAPatty", is positioned above the printed name and title.

George A. Patty  
Project Director